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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: SEPTEMBER 04, 2009

Media Reaction Summary: September 4, 2009

Summary: The ongoing media spate about the alleged presence of security company Blackwater settled a bit on Friday when Prime Minister Gilani described the reports on the "presence of Blackwater commandos in Pakistan as disinformation" and Interior Minister Malik declared that "Blackwater is not operating in Pakistan." Newspapers also highlighted the Pakistan Foreign Office's statement dispelling the "U.S. concerns" about nuclear proliferation as "uncalled-for, unwarranted and baseless." Also in an exclusive story, the English daily, "Dawn," reported Assistant Secretary Crowley as saying that "Pakistan has agreed to hold inspection of Harpoon missiles in its arsenal."

Most major newspapers ran in-depth editorials on the recent assassination bid on a Federal Minister in Islamabad and its ramifications. In its editorial on the subject, the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News," anticipated that the "Taliban may be preparing for a new offensive that is fiercer still than those that have come before." Likewise, the center-right national English daily "The Nation," observed that "no one believes that with the reverses suffered by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan in Swat, the threat of militancy has vanished from the country." However, the pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam," while editorializing the impact of the Afghan war on the United States, noted that the "latest surge in the killing of foreign troops in the war-torn country (Afghanistan) have resulted in widespread unrest among the American masses." End Summary.

News Stories

"Reports on Blackwater's Presence in Pakistan Are Disinformation: Prime Minister Gilani" "Express" (09/04)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Thursday declared that reports on the presence of American security company, Blackwater, in Pakistan were disinformation. To a question about the reduction in the US aid for defence, the prime minister said the finance minister was talking to US authorities on this issue."

"Blackwater Not Operating In Pakistan: Malik" "Daily Times" (09/04)

"Blackwater is not operating in Pakistan, we have our own system, rules and regulations and will not allow any body to operate from here, Interior Minister Rehman Malik said on Thursday. Talking to a private TV channel, he said the government would not compromise on

the country's sovereignty and reports regarding the increase in number of US marines were baseless."

"US Concerns About Nuclear Proliferation Uncalled For:FO" "Daily Times" (09/04)

"Pakistan on Thursday rejected US concerns on proliferation in the region and said such concerns were 'uncalled for, unwarranted and baseless' Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said at his weekly briefing on Thursday."

"Harpoon Inspection Allowed" "Dawn"(09/04)

"Pakistan has agreed to hold inspection of US-made Harpoon missiles in its arsenal to dispel allegations that it has modified them to target India, says a senior American official. 'We have raised the issue with the Pakistani government. The (Pakistan) government has responded with an agreement in principle for mutually agreed inspections,' US Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs P.J. Crowley told reporters."

"U.S. Funds Help Taliban; Charges Being Probed" "Dawn"(09/04)

"The U.S. administration and Congress are investigating allegations that their funds and food sent to Afghanistan end up in the hands of the Taliban. 'The idea that American taxpayer dollars are ending up with the Taliban is a case for grave concern,' says Congressman Bill Delahunt, a Democrat member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee."

"U.S. Lawmaker Seeks Obama Role For N-Test Ban" "The Nation" (09/04)

"A key American lawmaker, who unsuccessfully opposed the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, has expressed concern over the nuclear arms race in South Asia, and urged the Obama administration to encourage India and Pakistan to sign the treaty banning all nuclear tests and halt production of nuclear-weapon fissile material. 'U.S. should encourage both countries to abide by their current nuclear test moratoria and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban (Treaty)', Democratic Congressman Edward Markey said in a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday."

"U.S. Consensus On Afghansitan Crumbling" "The Nation" (09/04)

"Weeks from President Barack Obama expected move to send more troops to Afghanistan, the consensus behind the U.S. commitment there is crumbling as some raise the spectre of a new Vietnam. A growing number of experts doubt that the war can be won, while even Obama who has already dispatched an additional 21,000 reinforcement there, contemplates a further troop's increase and completes a strategic review."

"Pakistan Asks India To Maintain N-Test Moratorium" "Dawn"(09/04)

"The Foreign Office has urged New Delhi to continue to observe moratorium on nuclear tests and said Pakistan is concerned over reports about India planning new nuclear tests. 'We hope that the unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing effective since 1998 in the region will continue to be observed. We are obviously disturbed by media reports that India might be considering to conduct additional nuclear tests,' Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said at his weekly briefing on Thursday."

"Two Security Men Killed In Clash With Militants" "Dawn"(09/04)

"Two security personnel and a militant were killed and three security men were injured in a clash with militants in the Tump area of Turbat district on Thursday. According to sources, a convoy of Makran Scouts, a wing of Frontier Corps, was going from Mand to Turbat when four people on motorcycles opened fire, killing two men on the spot."

"TNSM Chief Patron Surrenders" "Dawn"(09/04)

"At least three militants were killed in a clash with a lashkar near Mingora on Thursday and the chief patron of the outlawed Tehrik

Nifaz-i-Shariat Muhammadi, Maulana Safiullah, surrendered along with two supporters."

"18 Held, Militants Houses Destroyed In Bara" "The News" (09/04)

"Security forces continued demolition of houses owned by militants or their supporters in Bara sub-division of Khyber Agency on the third day of the military operation on Thursday. Thirteen houses were destroyed with the help of explosives and heavy machinery in different parts of Bara, including Shlobar, Malikdinkhel, Kamarkhel and Sipah. Eighteen tribesmen described as suspects were arrested during the operation."

"Swat Lashkar Kills Three Militants" "The News" (09/04)

"A Qaumi Lashkar killed three militants in an exchange of fire in Kabal Tehsil of the Swat Valley, while seven militants were apprehended in the area during a search operation by security forces on Thursday."

"Maulvi Nazeer Group Bury The Hatchet With Ahmadzai Wazirs" "The News" (09/04)

"After months of tension in the militancy stricken South Waziristan tribal region, the Taliban militants led by Maulvi Nazeer signed accord with Ahmadzai Wazir tribes on Thursday in which the growing militants promised to cooperate in the restoration of peace in the region."

"No Favourites In Pakistan: Saudi Ambassador" "Dawn" (09/04)

"Saudi Arabia does not want Pakistan's political parties to fight each other, but will intervene to reconcile them only if asked to play such a role, the country's envoy said on Thursday. 'Political wrangling between parties in Pakistan is the country's internal matter. But if our brothers ask us to intervene, our doors will always be open for them,' Ambassador Abdul Aziz Ibrahim Al Ghadeer told Dawn."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Close Shave," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/04)
"The minister for religious affairs has been extremely fortunate. He narrowly escaped death in what was apparently a determined assassination attempt in Islamabad. The immediate conclusions are predictable. The minister, an outspoken critic of the Taliban, had been on the hit list of extremists. His status as a scholar, opposed to the orthodox, hard line view of Islam taken by the Taliban, also made him unpopular with them. We have been seeing the Taliban enter a new phase. . . The Taliban may be preparing for a new offensive that is fiercer still than those that have come before. This is ominous."

"Assassination Attempt," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (09/04)

"Since the death of the TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud in a drone attack last month the Taliban under their new leadership have mounted an offensive that has caught our security forces on the wrong foot. The latest to fall victim to an assassination attempt is the religious affairs minister, Hamid Saeed Kazmi. He suffered bullet injuries but the driver of his car was killed and his guard seriously injured. This is shocking especially because the incident comes after the government had been reassuring the people that security had been beefed up. Moreover, the Taliban have clearly indicated that the present strategy is a no-holds-barred one. Two suicide bomb attacks took dozens of lives in three days last week in Torkham and Mingora, followed by Wednesday's incident in Islamabad. . . What is more worrying is that complacency seems to have set in lately due to the let-up in suicide bombings in the past few months. This is dangerous because the Pakistan Army's war against the Taliban is only one prong of the security strategy. The trickier one calling for greater skills is the pre-emption of suicide attacks. This involves efficient intelligence-gathering as well as

precautionary measures at vulnerable points."

"Not By Force Alone," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (09/04)

". . . Ideally, the government should widen the scope and participation of the national debate on militancy, extremism and terrorism, by involving non-government interest groups and show readiness to embrace the reality on the ground that the use of force, alone, is no more a viable option."

"AQ Khan Should Beware Of Taliban," an editorial-note in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (09/04)

". . . Dr Khan is a prime target for the Taliban who kidnap important people for ransom. If he gets 'lifted,' his price will be very high, higher than any the Taliban have received for diplomats and film directors so far. And the ransom will be demanded not only from Pakistan but from the U.S. as well. And he will go to the highest bidder. Even in normal circumstances, Dr Khan would be a very attractive victim, but given Islamabad's security, he is under more threat than any other person living in the country. Both the media and Dr Khan should pause to consider this point dispassionately."

"Persistent Failure," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/04)

"No one believes that with the reverses suffered by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan in Swat, the threat of militancy has vanished from the country. However, everyone expects that the security lapses in the past, which have cost Pakistan dearly both in terms of life and property, should have brought home a [stronger] message of alertness and security consciousness. . . There is urgent need to fill these gaps, put the security personnel through a course of rigorous training and make available to them the right kind of equipment. At the same time, we as a nation and especially these personnel have to develop a sense of security consciousness."

"The Taliban Challenge," an op-ed by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, former chief of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (09/04)

"There is consensus among the Pakistani public with regard to the real motives of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Whether they are a single and homogeneous entity fighting for the same cause, or an agglomeration of heterogeneous and religiously conflicting groups? And are they mere mercenaries being used by foreign powers to promote and pursue their respective agendas in the region? No doubt the Taliban are getting foreign support in the shape of money and weapons, but it would be wrong to say that all Taliban and their tribal backers do not have their own objectives and are merely playing the game of our enemies. The Taliban are archenemy of the materialistic and immoral Western civilization and openly vow to counter its inflow into their homeland. Our ruling elite can appease the Taliban, or at least manage to curtail the popular support for them, if it gives up the policy of turning Pakistan into a secular state and honestly takes some concrete steps to make the country an Islamic, democratic and welfare state."

"Does U.S. Want To Get Rid Of The Afghan Quagmire?" an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (09/04)

"The ongoing war in Afghanistan has given rise to countless difficulties for the U.S. and its allies. The fast-declining economy and the galloping surge coupled with an exponential increase in the unemployment rate and the latest surge in the killing of foreign troops in the war-torn country has resulted in widespread unrest among the American masses. Consequently, the opposition to the Afghan war in the U.S. society is growing with the every passing day. With an aim to withdraw its own troops from Afghanistan, the U.S. is raising an Afghan army which would be used as a proxy to guard the American interests in the region. According to analysts, the U.S. is now fully concentrating on Pakistan and the expansion in its embassy in Islamabad and the deployment of Blackwater commandos

provide an ample proof in Washington's new strategy which serves as a toxin for the security and integrity of Pakistan."

"Developments In Afghanistan," an op-ed by M. A. Niazi in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (09/04)

"Three developments came in Afghanistan in August, all pointing in the same direction, that of a lack of American achievement. First was what might prove to be the first of a two-round Afghan election.

Then came the revelation that August had proven to be the bloodiest month for the Americans since they had first invaded that country in November 2001. With all this happening, the US commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal made his long-awaited report, which said in milspeak (military language) what many had been saying in plain English for years: that the invasion had failed, or at least not yet succeeded. The earlier developments buttressed that conclusion. . . Therefore, the Pakistan government should be preparing itself for the eventuality it believed could not happen, and the reason why the American alliance was pursued not just by the government and armed forces, but also by the political parties: the Americans departing from this region. Those who do not believe in such a departure have not followed historical precedents, when the US did depart even though the Afghans had just given them victory in the Cold War. US assurances that it wishes to build a permanent relationship with Pakistan and Afghanistan may be discounted, because the USA follows only its own interest."

"U.S. Expansionist Designs On Our Soil," an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (09/04)

"Obama administration wants to spend the U.S. assistance under Kerry-Lugar bill using its own channels, not letting government of Pakistan utilize the aid. America will not leave any stone unturned in making Pakistan its colony if it happened to spend the money independently.... Tehrik-i-Insaf's Dr. Shireen Mazari has disclosed that 3000 APCs for Blackwater have already been offloaded at Port Qasim. According to her the U.S. interference in Pakistan has become intolerable.... In order to further the interference, America has expanded its embassy and the reports of 1000 Blackwater operatives' deployment have already been published.... These 3000 APC's will be enough to say 'hands up' to the corridors of power. This situation is tantamount to making Pakistan a pawn in the U.S. hands.... The nation was upset with drone attacks and now even its soil will not be safe from its [U.S.] access.... If America can show Balochistan on world map as an independent country then it can erase Pakistan from the same."

"Feeling Insecure In Islamabad," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (09/04)

". . . Islamabad is not a secure city. Foreign diplomats who live here feel endangered. Many Pakistanis who seek honour in isolationism draw comfort from the fact that 'foreigners' are uneasy coming to Islamabad. The truth is that the city has become "Talibanised" among the lower classes that outnumber the rest of its population. Anyone who has held a discussion among the lower middle class student community there would bear witness to this fact. Yet, those Pakistani circles that are endangered would rather focus on how the Americans and other foreigners have made Islamabad unsafe by beefing up their own security arrangements. Sadly, the TV reporter is querulous in tone when he reports on the 'hundreds of barriers' erected by Islamabad police to minimise incidents of terrorism in the city. The media message is: Islamabad is suffering because of the security barriers and the Americans. But this message goes in favour of the Taliban and Al Qaeda who would like nothing more than the removal of all obstacles in Islamabad."

"Swat On Edge," an op-ed by Dr. Masooda Bano in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (09/04)

"The initial calm in Swat and surrounding areas that were the focus of the last few months' military operations is proving short-lived again. Reports of dead bodies being found on the streets of Swat are frequent. The possibility that this time these bodies are those of the Taliban militants targeted by the military forces is no consolation. Firstly, because there is no proper investigation of

these cases to know for sure who the victims or the killers, are, secondly, if someone belonging to the Taliban mindset does not allow the state to kill them ruthlessly and put the bodies in mass graves.

There is something very horrifying about the mass graves being discovered in Swat in recent weeks. The facts and figures behind who the victims are and how they got there need to be discovered. At the same time, the number of militant attacks is again on the rise after a relative calm. After the attack on the police station in Swat that killed young trainees this week, there is now the attack on Minister for Religious Affairs Hamid Saeed Kazmi. Clearly, the problems are continuing. . . ."

"Less than Alive," an editorial in the Peshawar-based, independent regional daily "The Frontier Post" (cir. 7,000) (09/04)

". . . In these times, the military has definitely dealt crippling blows to the terrorist syndicate, sequestering its thugs, scurrying hither and thither. And it is for the civilian law-enforcement and intelligence apparatus to build upon this advantage by mopping up the fleeing thus and hunting down their lairs and demolish their hideouts. But on that score the administration doesn't appear as intent and as active as it should have been. . . ."

Patterson